

Mid-East

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## Israel's Missile Report Questioned by U.S. Aides

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 6—  
American officials said today that Egypt's Soviet-built missile defense system had been improved recently but they questioned Israel's assessment of the extent of the build-up.

Officials said American information indicated that the Soviet Union was still refraining from the serious step of putting low-altitude SAM-3 missiles, its most advanced anti-aircraft weapon, into operational sites within the 20-mile-wide belt along the canal that the Israelis consider most sensitive.

The Israeli Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Haim Bar-Lev, said

at a news conference today that the Egyptian defense system, consisting of high-altitude SAM-2 and the SAM-3 missiles, extended through a belt starting 15 miles west of the canal.

American officials contend that there are no operational SAM-3 sites within 25 miles of the canal and that the few SAM-2 sites about 15 miles from the canal have been there for some time.

The officials report that the newest complex of high-altitude SAM-2 missiles and low-altitude SAM-3 missiles is 30 to 35 miles west of the canal.

Some American officials take

the position that Moscow has heeded Washington's warnings against moving its highly effective SAM-3 missiles into the 20-miles belt at the risk of touching off a new escalation in the fighting.

### U.S. Concern Voiced

Both here and at the California White House in San Clemente, where President Nixon has spent the last several days, spokesmen have underlined American concern about the dangers of miscalculation and unintentional moves toward wider war.

Washington says its diplomatic efforts to establish a temporary cease-fire along the canal are the best means of defusing the tensions.

Recent warnings from the White House, officials said, have been intended to assure Israel of Washington's commitment to her security and to caution the Soviet Union not to take advantage of the American delay in answering Israel's request for more Phantom F-4 jet fighter-bombers.

Although the Middle East Combatants have not accepted the American proposals for a 90-day cease-fire, the White House has taken comfort that the parties have rejected the proposals out of hand. But officials acknowledge that the heightened air combat along the canal could disrupt the diplomatic initiative.

American officials interpret the recent expansion of the Soviet missile defenses in the United Arab Republic as part of the continuing commitment to provide the Nasser Government with an effective air defense system embracing SAM-2 and SAM-3 missiles, rapid-firing, radar-controlled anti-aircraft guns, and Soviet pilots to help provide air cover over the Egyptian heartland.

American officials report no evidence, however, that Moscow has recently introduced operational sites of the 30-foot Ganef rocket, as some recent reports indicated.

### Challenge to Israelis

Both American and Israeli officials agree that Israel air superiority over Egypt and possibly over the canal is being challenged by the expanded Soviet air defense system.

But American officials interpret the Soviet build-up as a response to Israel's deep penetration raids against the Egyptian heartland and close to Cairo. These raids might undermine the Nasser regime politically and felt compelled to react.

Previously, the Egyptians had been equipped only with SAM-2 missiles, hitherto not very effective against Israeli attacks. Subsequently, complexes of SAM-2 and SAM-3 missiles with interlocking anti-aircraft guns provided defense against all levels of attacks around Cairo, Alexandria and the Aswan Dam.

Reluctantly, the Israelis suspended their deep raids and indicated they could tolerate the situation so long as the new defense complexes were not moved into the canal region near their defense lines. Since that time, the Soviet build-up has crept toward the canal though by American estimate there are no complete missile complexes closer than 25 miles from the canal.

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